Office of Information Technology Services (ITS)
Overview

The Office of Information Technology Services (ITS) plays a supportive role to the Department. In the past, the Office of ITS at Central Office was significantly larger and included engineers and computer technicians. Now, ITS is mainly comprised of 11 Systems Analysts and Programmer Analysts. The analysts are responsible for all aspects of data systems, including systems design, development of data systems and reports, and systems maintenance. Other services are provided by a Project Manager, a Security Officer, a Webmaster, and a Director (Sanford Hostetter). Due to ongoing budget constraints and the desire to use the latest technologies, contractors have been used to fill some of the gaps and work on important initiatives. This has been a problem sometimes because some of the contractors left prematurely. We now have one remaining contractor and a P-14 employee.

The Office of ITS is responsible for the design, development and maintenance of existing or developing systems. Due to low staffing, in most cases, only one person is knowledgeable about a system.
[Please refer to the Applications Excel spreadsheet for a list of systems.]

The following people are virtually 100% committed to the following jobs:
> **Web sites** – Darlene (prior to the last layoff, seven people worked on Web sites either full-time or part-time)
> **Financial Management System** – Julie & Beth (prior to the last layoff there were four people working full-time on FMS, and a need for one more)
> **Medicaid** – Steve
> **Avatar** (Patient/Resident Admissions and Information System) – Virgil
> **CCS3** (Consumer Services/CSB system) – Beverly & Diane
> **Multiple Systems**—Grace & Hung

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VITA has had a major impact on procedures and IT expenditures. According to the (http://www.vita.virginia.gov/about/default.aspx?id=271) "About Us" page on the VITA Web site, 2003 legislation created VITA as part of the Strategic Plan for Information Technology, enabling "one of the most sweeping reforms of information technology in the nation". VITA absorbed all computer engineers, technicians, computer operators, and all computer hardware and operational software. Part of VITA's strategy includes plans to downsize to only management within 10 years of their start. VITA contracted the work out, using an ingenious payment system, and encouraged state workers to get jobs with Northrup-Grumman, where they would be guaranteed a job for one year. Now, all computer and server maintenance is provided by engineers and technicians who either work for VITA or their contractor, and we must contact the VITA Customer Care Center for all hardware and software needs.

Two of the newer positions in IT are a result of VITA's mandate that all departments have a Security Officer, and all but the smallest system development project must be managed by a certified Project Manager. In order to save money, ITS hired its own Project Manager.

VITA has mandated certain standards for department Web sites, including a common appearance and functionality of the department banner and the left menu, allowable fonts, etc., including accessibility by disabled people.   VITA provided little instruction on how to accomplish it and the standards are subject to change every couple of years.

The Webmaster is responsible for altering the appearance and functionality of the Web sites according to VITA's requirements and providing reports about site usage on an ad hoc basis. The Webmaster is responsible for maintaining content on several Web sites including the CODIE Intranet site: http://www.dmhmrsas/), Internet sites for DMHMRSAS (http://www.dmhmrsas.virginia.gov/), OIG (http://www.oig.virginia.gov/), Catawba (http://www.catawba.dmhmrsas.virginia.gov/), Infant VA (http://www.infantva.org/default.htm), and several Sub-sites including MHPC, SASC, VASIP/COSIG, WDI, Terrorism, and System Leadership.

The typical internet user quickly scans the Homepage for the first link that sounds like it might lead to the area of interest. We can't rely on users to carefully read paragraph after paragraph of information to find what they want. It will remain an ongoing challenge to present up-to-date information in a clear, concise and easy-to-find format.

Our Communications Manager, Meghan McGuire, is experiented with providing news content and has been active in making suggestions for Web site improvements. Meghan has been working with office staff to present new initiatives in a clear, consistent format.

[Please see handouts on "good" and "needs improvement" web page content.]

All offices are relied upon to provide updated information for the Web sites. SharePoint software has been utilized to promote direct user input and sharing of internal information within work groups at CO. SharePoint can be a useful tool.

Please remember that CODIE and the DMHMRSAS Web sites remain the primary sources of information. The "care and feeding" of CODIE and DMHMRSAS sites is dependent upon your knowledge and experience. The Webmaster is merely a technician who does not have the benefit of your knowledge of what has changed and what is no longer relevant.

SUMMATION

ITS, like the whole department, is trying to do more with less. In the first few Regional team meetings, there was a lot of discussion about poor communication among CO offices and between CO and the providers. There were several complaints that technical questions (such as how new laws affect policies and procedures) are repeatedly answered over the phone because there was no available summary documentation.

The DMHMRSAS internet is one tool that can make your life easier. If there is a question that is asked repeatedly, or there is an explanation about what a new law means in practical terms, these can be addressed on your "frequently asked questions page". Having such information on your section's FAQ page will enable a person to easily find the information so you don't get so many phone calls, or it can shorten your phone conversation by allowing you to refer the person to the appropriate Web page for more information. It can even help the regional team decide what office to contact for assistance.

The Web site can be a valuable tool to convey your section's important information. Please add an item to your next staff meeting: Briefly summarize what this office/section does so that anyone who sees your office (or section) page will gain a quick understanding of what you do. That will enable users to know whether to read more of the page, or look elsewhere.
[Please see the handout on proposed introductions to office pages.]

In staff meetings over the next weeks and months, please discuss what information will be helpful for people who seek answers to their questions on the Web site. If you have some information prepared either in an e-mail or your notes, the Webmaster will be happy to write it in the FAQ style and return it to you for review before adding it to the Web site. Perhaps a section containing information that may be of particular interest to providers--or the general public--would be helpful. The Webmaster welcomes your suggestions.